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A New Approach: The Feminist Musicology
Studies of Susan McClary and Marcia J. Citron

by

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a BA Project
Submitted to the
Faculty of the Music and Worship Department
in Partial Fulfillment of
the Requirements for the Degree
of
Bachelor of Arts in Music

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Date _____

Spring 2014
Cedarville University
Cedarville, Ohio

Abstract

A New Approach: The Feminist Musicology Studies of Susan McClary and Marcia J. Citron

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Cedarville University (April 2014)

Chair: Dr. Lyle Anderson

One of the currently prevalent analytic approaches in academia is feminist theory and criticism. Its combination with musicology has influenced the field for the past four decades. The goal of the new approach, loosely termed “feminist musicology,” has been to discover, analyze, discuss, and promote the representation of women and the “feminine” essence in various disciplines of music. Today, feminist musicology is highly researched, published in books and journals, and presented as scholarly papers at various musicological conferences around the world. This new approach introduces the ideologies of feminism to the study of music.

Susan McClary and Marcia J. Citron are two musicologists who were influenced by these ideologies and have guided the musicological world in this direction of feminist musicology. Both have made serious contributions to the emerging field of feminist musicology. Both researched the ideas of gender musical construction within musical narratives, music as a gendered discourse, and historical and social factors that affected women in music. Although they have met with considerable resistance, Susan McClary and Marcia J. Citron have significantly expanded the scope of musicology through their application of feminist theory.

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Introduction

One of the currently prevalent analytic approaches in academia is feminist theory and criticism. Its combination with musicology has influenced the field for the past four decades. The goal of the new approach, loosely termed “feminist musicology,” has been to discover, analyze, discuss, and promote the representation of women and the “feminine” essence in various disciplines of music. Today, feminist musicology is highly researched, published in books and journals, and presented as scholarly papers at various musicological conferences around the world. This new approach introduces the ideologies of feminism to the study of music. Susan McClary and Marcia J. Citron are two musicologists influenced by these ideologies and have guided the musicological world in this direction of feminist musicology.

History of Feminism and Feminist Musicology

The feminist movement emerged in the 1840s in the United States at the first feminist conference at Seneca Falls, New York with the famous women's paraphrase of the Declaration of Independence.¹ “We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men and women are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.”² Feminism sought to increase interest in women's lives, activities, and experiences.³ Feminists, at the core, wanted to achieve a world without oppression and negative attitudes toward women in every aspect of society and culture.⁴

1 Robert Edgar Riegel and Carl Hertzog, *A High Point of American Feminism* (El Paso, Texas: Texas Western College, 1965), 4.

2 Julia T. Wood, *Gendered Lives: Communication, Gender, and Culture* (Belmont, California: Wadsworth Publishing, 2011), 71.

3 Susan C. Cook, and Judy S. Tsou, *Cecilia Reclaimed: Feminist Perspectives on Gender and Music* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1994), 3.

4 Wood, *Gendered Lives*, 75.

Feminism reached the discipline of musicology in the 1970s, when some musicologists turned their focus to the history of women's participation in music. Historians and musicologists compiled resources that highlighted noteworthy and influential women composers and musicians.⁵ James R. Briscoe published two anthologies featuring women composers, entitled *Historical Anthology of Music by Women* and *Contemporary Anthology of Music by Women*. Karin Pendle produced and edited a collection of essays about women in music, entitled *Women & Music: A History*. Diane Jezic discussed unknown female composers in her book, entitled *Women Composers: The Lost Tradition Found*. Musicologists uncovered music by Hildegard von Bingen, Barbara Strozzi, Clara Schumann, Ethel Smyth, Ruth Crawford Seeger, and many other women in the field of music from past centuries.⁶ Although many women had performed and composed music, many were hidden from history and in need of discovery.

Different ideologies and attitudes from the extreme side of patriarchy directed towards women concealed most women's music for centuries.⁷ Musicologist Jane M. Bowers stated, "We have observed that no matter what kind of musical activities women have engaged in, and no matter how vital or distinguished those activities might be, a historical process of making those activities invisible has nevertheless been at work."⁸ The contributions of musical women of the past have been rediscovered through the efforts of many musicologists. These women are now

5 Jane A. Bernstein, *Women's Voices across Musical Worlds* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 2004), 5.

6 Susan McClary, *Feminine Endings: Music, Gender, and Sexuality* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991), 5.

7 Marcia J. Citron, "Gender, Professionalism and the Musical Canon," *The Journal Of Musicology* 8, no. 1 (1990): 114, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/763525>.

8 Jane M. Bower, "Feminist Scholarship and the Field of Musicology: I," *College Music Symposium* 29 (1989): 87, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40373950>.

included in newer editions of music history books and more college classes now specifically highlight women in music. Music companies are selling more scores and recordings of works by women composers.⁹ The development of a feminist approach to musicology eventually grew from these scholarly pursuits.

Through their research, feminist musicologists have attributed a lack of recognition of women in music to issues of societal status and of women not having the power to promote their own music in a male-dominated field.¹⁰ Before the twentieth century, certain ideologies and attitudes marginalized women's contributions in music. One attitude of this nature was the idea that women's minds and bodies were weaker than men, and therefore having lesser abilities and limited options for vocations.¹¹ A similar attitude presented the idea that women were too emotional and too unstable to be able to concentrate fully on musical studies. In the nineteenth century, the only truly accepted way for a woman to be involved in music was to submit to and support her husband's musical activities.¹² For example, Alma Mahler was forced by her husband's insecurity not to compose music and thus she supported only her husband's musical activities until his death.¹³ These ideologies promoted "prescriptive literature that told women which kinds of musical behavior were right or wrong for them to engage in; slurs cast on women who crossed over gender-ascribed boundaries of one type or another; allegations of easy virtue made about women who chose a musical career; and descriptions of the female musician as

9 Carol Neuls-Bates, *Women in Music: An Anthology of Source Readings from the Middle Ages to the Present* (New York: Harper & Row, 1982), xvii.

10 Bernstein, *Women's Voices across Musical Worlds*, 5.

11 Riegel, *The High Point of American Feminism*, 4.

12 Citron, "Gender, Professionalism, and the Musical Canon," 111.

13 Marcia J. Citron, *Gender and the Musical Canon* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2000), 61.

the personification of sensual intoxication.”¹⁴ Twentieth-century thinking has refuted most of these ideologies, but women before the twentieth century could never hope to escape these negative attitudes. With this realization, feminist scholars set a goal to ensure all women and related “feminine” issues achieved a commendable place in music studies.¹⁵

By the 1980s, feminist scholars realized the data they were collecting was challenging the traditional discourses in musicological studies. This challenge prompted some musicologists to seek answers to questions about music and gender. Some scholars questioned the values that allowed the musical canon, or the common repertoire of classical music, to be dominated by male composers.¹⁶ Scholars also raised questions concerning the ability of women to produce uniquely “feminine” music in a male-dominated field with male aesthetic values.¹⁷ With concern over this issue, Pendle offered some questions: “How might we distinguish the expression of women's experience from the expression of male or patriarchal constructions of the feminine?” and “Do women have any authentically female experience unconditioned by patriarchal oppression and constraints?”¹⁸ These overarching questions deal with all areas of musicology; thus, musicologists recognize gender bias in all aspects of research. An example of this is with ethnographers, or those who study culture and traditions, recognizing the presence of male bias because the majority of their data came only from male informants in their fieldwork.¹⁹

The idea of “feminine” and “masculine” in music is also disputed among

14 Bowers, “Feminist Scholarship and the Field of Musicology: I,” 86-87.

15 Ibid., 81.

16 Ibid., 84.

17 Bernstein, *Women's Voices Across Musical Worlds*, 5.

18 Karin Pendle, *Women and Music: A History* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001), 15.

19 Bernstein, *Women's Voices across Musical Worlds*, 5-6.

music scholars, especially in non-texted music, but the basic concept deals with the practice of reflecting the aesthetic properties of socially constructed gender characteristics within music.²⁰ Accepted by most scholars, “masculine” music displays more active, dominant, and/or prominent characteristics, while “feminine” music displays more lyrical, passive, and/or supportive themes.²¹ Large instrumental music genres, such as symphonies, concerti, and operas, were considered “masculine,” while smaller musical genres with “sentimental” or “melodious” sounds, such as vocal, piano, and chamber music, were considered “feminine.” This controversial idea is rooted in seventeenth- to nineteenth-century gender ideals of strong intellectual men and weak emotional women. The constructions of “masculinity” and “femininity” may differ from composer to composer, but the stereotypes remain.²²

In the nineteenth century, when women composed “masculine” music they were considered bold and daring, and often criticized for “betraying their feminine nature.”²³ But when women composed music in line with their own “feminine” nature, they were composing what society expected from women and perpetuated the idea of their inability to write larger works.²⁴ Clara Schumann was a fortunate woman because she was considered “almost above gender” and praised for her “masculine” accomplishments.²⁵ Available education and family encouragement probably enabled Clara Schumann to attain this reputation. However, most women could not escape the

20 Pendle, *Women and Music*, 3.

21 Susan McClary, "Of Patriarchs ... and Matriarchs, Too: Susan McClary Assesses the Challenges and Contributions of Feminist Musicology," *The Musical Times* 135, no. 1816 (1994): 367, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1003224>.

22 Diane Jezic, *Women Composers: The Lost Tradition Found* (New York: Feminist Press, 1988), 4.

23 Jezic, *Women Composers*, 4-5.

24 Ibid.

25 Bowers, "Feminist Scholarship and the Field of Musicology: I," 87.

criticism from their male counterparts.²⁶ For example, Fanny Mendelssohn Hensel could not escape criticism from her father and her brother, Felix. Her father strongly believed she should be only a wife and mother—not a musician, while her brother believed she could be a musician, just not publish her works.²⁷

By the end of the 1980s, conferences organized by the American Musicological Society began to accept papers and presentations in feminist theory and criticism. In 1988, conferences were held at Carleton University in Ottawa and at Dartmouth where papers and panels on feminist criticism were presented.²⁸ In 1989, the meeting of the Society offered the first discipline-sponsored workshop in feminist theory and music.²⁹ In the summer of 1991, three international conferences focused on feminism and music in Utrecht, Holland, Minneapolis, Minnesota, and London, England.³⁰ From that point, feminist theory and criticism became a popular subject at these conferences.³¹ The overwhelming interest and popularity of feminist criticism within music influenced the growth of feminist musicology for many years after these specific conferences.

Based upon musicology journals and other resources that continue to be published today, it appears feminist musicology has become established in academia. Musicologists of future generations may continue to develop various feminist ideologies within their musical studies. However, there are two musicologists who particularly changed the field of musicology with their unique ideas and approaches.

26 Jezic, *Women Composers*, 4-5.

27 Marcia Citron, "The Lieder of Fanny Mendelssohn Hensel," *The Musical Quarterly* 69, no. 4 (1983): 570-572, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/741981>.

28 Susan McClary, "Reshaping a Discipline: Musicology and Feminism in the 1990s," *Feminist Studies* 19, no. 2 (1993): 410, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3178376> and McClary, *Feminine Endings*, 6.

29 McClary, *Feminine Endings*, 6.

30 McClary, "Reshaping a Discipline," 411.

31 McClary, *Feminine Endings*, 6.

Susan McClary

Susan McClary was born in 1946, received her doctorate from Harvard in 1976, and currently teaches at Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland, Ohio.³² Although her work has received much criticism over the years, her research has helped modernize the study of music.³³ McClary became interested in this new field, first, when she noted an absence of research, and second, when she observed new aspects of music through a gendered perspective.³⁴ McClary spoke of her interest to get into the field of feminist musicology as follows: “It seemed to me obvious not only that musicology too might benefit from engagement with questions related to gender and sexuality but also that interdisciplinary conversations would gain from the presence of music in their discussions.”³⁵ McClary's main work is concerned with determining how historically constructed ideas of gender and sexuality have influenced musical procedures from the sixteenth century to the present.³⁶

McClary has produced numerous research publications in these areas including her first major book on the topic, *Feminine Endings*, published in 1991. This book presents a feminist critique of music within the traditional academic disciplines, such as musicology and music theory. Within her book, McClary describes her own methodology of feminist discourse by asking “What would a feminist criticism of music look like? What issues would it raise, and how would it ground its arguments theoretically?”³⁷

32 Case Western Reserve University, "Susan McClary, Professor," Department of Music, <http://music.case.edu/faculty/susan-mcclary>.

33 McClary, *Feminine Endings*, xiii and ix.

34 McClary, *Feminine Endings*, x.

35 Susan McClary, *Reading Music: Selected Essays* (England: Ashgate Pub. Co., 2007), xiii.

36 McClary, “Reshaping a Discipline,” 417.

37 McClary, *Feminine Endings*, 7.

McClary has developed a methodology over the years that has clustered into five main categories. First, she has looked into the musical constructions of gender and sexuality; namely, the idea of “masculine” and “feminine” characteristics within music.³⁸ She has observed that music of a given time period tends to reflect the gender organization of that particular society and that the idea of “masculinity” and “femininity” changes over time with these societies. For example, “femininity” was different in the eighteenth century compared to current society and an obvious implication of that is the sense of “feminine” fashion and appropriate vocations for women. However, some gendered codes within music have remained the same over the centuries. Examples of this are the similarities between the “musical representations of masculine bravura or feminine seductiveness in Indiana Jones movies” and similar representations in Cavalli's seventeenth century operas.³⁹ McClary believes this phenomenon is due to the unchanging perspective of gender over the centuries. However, she states that more research in the area of historical background is needed to understand fully the interactions between the two genders in music.⁴⁰

Second, McClary has studied certain gendered aspects of traditional music theory. As discussed earlier, composers chose to use “feminine” or “masculine” musical characteristics in their music, whether intentionally or not, to create their particular composition.⁴¹ This was a rather difficult task because the composer had to choose a musical function the listener would identify as either “feminine” or

38 McClary, *Feminine Endings*, 7.

39 Ibid., 8.

40 Ibid., 37-38.

41 Ibid., 9.

“masculine.”⁴² When portraying a female character or “feminine” characteristics, music portraying a softness or passivity is often used.⁴³ When portraying a male character or “masculine” characteristics, music portraying a roughness or aggressiveness was chosen. McClary believes these gendered codes were securely established during the seventeenth century and they continue to influence current opinions in some way.⁴⁴ Men were supposed to hide their emotions, be strong, and be secure. Women were expected to be emotional and therefore, thought of as inferior.⁴⁵

According to McClary, these gender expectations were expressed within the compositional procedures of various pieces, especially within musical dramas. For example, in Monteverdi's *L'Orfeo*, McClary notes the differences between the melodic lines representing Orfeo and the melodic lines representing Euridice. For Orfeo, Monteverdi uses the “most familiar and most predictable progressions for that time” and it is “harmonized in the strongest fashion available.”⁴⁶ Orfeo's opening statement in the opera descends in a G-Dorian scale from the scale degree 5 to the mediant and it is harmonized with a G2, F2, and Bb2 in the bass line (Example 1).⁴⁷

⁴² McClary, *Feminine Endings*, 36.

⁴³ Ibid., 9.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 7.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 50.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 40.

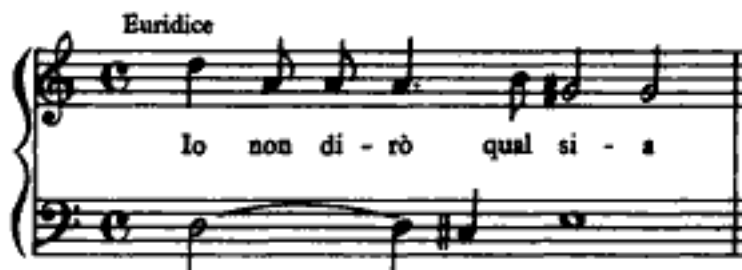
⁴⁷ Ibid.

Example 1: Syntactical Reduction of Orfeo's statement in "Rosa del ciel."



However, Orfeo's melodic line changes when Euridice comes into the picture. This probably represents Euridice's seductive influence upon Orfeo.⁴⁸ Previously, Orfeo was in the mode of G-Dorian, but when Euridice enters, Orfeo's pitch center changes to d minor. He is in an entirely different reality representing his different emotional state with Euridice around.⁴⁹ With the melodic lines of Euridice, McClary observes that the music is more unstable, representing Euridice's hesitancy to speak forwardly with Orfeo. Euridice makes a musical statement that is stable and compelling, but immediately moves to an unexpected goal. For example, in one moment she sings a D5 down to an A4, then immediately to G#4 (Example 2).⁵⁰

Example 2: Reducation of Euridice's opening statement in "Io non dirò."



48 McClary, *Feminine Endings*, 41-42.

49 Ibid., 42.

50 Ibid., 44-45.

The instability of Euridice's melodic line is apparent in the musical construction.

Third, McClary researched the idea of gender and sexuality in absolute music.⁵¹ Not surprisingly, the majority of feminist musical criticism up to McClary's time dealt with texted music. However, McClary decided to take on the challenge of feminist musical criticism as applied to purely instrumental music.⁵² In this part of her research, she focused on the idea of tension and release in music using sexual metaphors with “masculine” and “feminine” themes. According to McClary, this process remained the same from Bach's organ fugues to Brahms's symphonies.⁵³ Even though this description can be uncomfortable for some people to imagine, McClary is actually using types of metaphors music theorists used in the seventeenth century to describe the listener's musical experience.⁵⁴ According to music theorist A. B. Marx, an opening “masculine” theme enters and is soon followed by a secondary “feminine” theme in the sonata-allegro procedure.⁵⁵ There are also other forms of music where the “masculine” and the “feminine” can work together to create a beautiful soundscape of music. Even though this idea of interaction is interesting and can be used to analyze music, McClary eventually asks whether we should continue labeling music as “masculine” or “feminine” because these labels can be offensive in today's culture.⁵⁶

McClary found that it was no surprise that this technique of tension and release is used within the music of Bizet's *Carmen*, an opera characterized in extremes in “masculine” and “feminine” tensions. In the most recognizable vocal

51 McClary, *Feminine Endings*, 12.

52 Bowers, “Feminist Scholarship and the Field of Musicology: I,” 91.

53 McClary, *Feminine Endings*, 12.

54 Ibid., 125.

55 Ibid., 13.

56 Ibid., 14.

piece in this opera, the “Habañera,” the chord progression teases the listener into unpredictable musical directions. For example, the music descends chromatically down a tetrachord and subsequently, the rest of the scale in the following example (Example 3).⁵⁷ When discussing Carmen's characteristics within this piece, McClary states: “She knows how to hook and manipulate desire. In her musical discourse, she is slippery, unpredictable, maddening, irresistible. Or at least this is the nature of her song.”⁵⁸

Example 3: Opening statement of the “Habañera” from *Carmen*.

The musical score for the opening of the "Habañera" from *Carmen* is presented in a multi-staff format. The top staff is for Carmen, followed by staves for Sopranos I & II, Tenors, and Basses, which are grouped under the label "Chorus." The bottom staff is for the Piano. The tempo is marked "Allegretto, quasi Andantino." The key signature has two flats. The music features a chromatic descent in the piano accompaniment and a vocal line for Carmen. The lyrics are: "L'amour Love is est un oi-seau re - bel - le Que nul ne peut ap - pri - voi - ser, free as the way - ward breeze, - It can be shy, - it - can be bold."

However, for Tchaikovsky's Symphony No. 4, this technique is based more on the technical aspects of the music, than on the seductive aspects. In the final movement,

⁵⁷ McClary, *Feminine Endings*, 58.

⁵⁸ Susan McClary, *Georges Bizet, Carmen: Cambridge Opera Handbooks* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 76-77.

the “masculine” theme expresses the idea of a hero, while the “feminine” theme expresses female seduction.⁵⁹ According to McClary, these two themes interact within a sonata form and act out a story portraying sexual desire and feminine dominance.⁶⁰ McClary does suggest Tchaikovsky, after hearing a performance of *Carmen*, was influenced by Bizet's compositional techniques when he wrote this symphony, so the connection between the symphony and *Carmen* becomes more understandable.⁶¹

Fourth, McClary discusses the idea of music as a gendered discourse. A gendered discourse is a critical discussion of the gendered aspects or implications of music. Specifically, McClary researches the idea of gender identity with music. In her historical research, McClary has found that music has been considered a “feminine” activity for so long that male composers over the centuries have been trying to prove themselves to be “masculine.” She describes this specific approach in the following quotation: “If the whole enterprise of musical activity is always already fraught with gender-related anxieties, then feminist critique provides a most fruitful way of approaching some of the anomalies that characterize musical institutions.”⁶²

Research within this category has turned up some historical phenomena. For example, McClary notes that some scholars believe the English have less documented music compared to the Germans or French because of their association of music with effeminacy.⁶³ Another example includes the move from romanticism to modernism. This was an attempt to remasculinize the art form of music by straying away from various emotions.⁶⁴ The attitude that was formed in the seventeenth century and

⁵⁹ McClary, *Feminine Endings*, 71.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 71-76.

⁶¹ Ibid., 70.

⁶² Ibid., 17.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 18.

apparently changed at the beginning of nineteenth century was that men were supposed to “stifle their feelings,” while it was considered “feminine” to “indulge in emotional expression.”⁶⁵ Romanticism indulges emotional expression with music, while much modern music does not care about this expression.

McClary's final category in her methodology is the identification of female musicians' discursive strategies. Women have coexisted in the same societies as men, but their approach to developing their careers is different from that of their male counterparts.⁶⁶ She states that over the centuries there have been many obstacles in women's way which men did not have to face. Women were often considered unfit for a musical career and some were barred from receiving any type of musical education. If women did compose or perform music, it was often subject to ridicule by the “masculine” musical culture for either being “feminine” (a trait for which women could not escape criticism) or pretending to be “masculine” (a trait that was not acceptable for women to emulate).⁶⁷ This prevailing attitude may explain the absence in symphonic and opera repertoires of works by women composers. To some, women supposedly were not able to achieve “greatness.”⁶⁸ The main source of music by women comes from solo voice, piano, or small chamber ensemble repertoire. Unfortunately, these genres may not receive the same attention as larger work genres.

⁶⁹ In the past, women musicians who struggled for recognition include Countess of Dia, Barbara Strozzi, Fanny Mendelssohn Hensel, Clara Wieck Schumann, Cécile Chaminade, Amy Cheney Beach, Lili Boulanger, and Ruth Crawford Seeger.⁷⁰ Within

⁶⁵ McClary, *Feminine Endings*, 50.

⁶⁶ McClary, “Of Patriarchs ... and Matriarchs, Too,” 409.

⁶⁷ McClary, *Feminine Endings*, 18-19.

⁶⁸ McClary, “Reshaping a Discipline,” 400.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 400-401.

⁷⁰ McClary, “Of Patriarchs ... and Matriarchs, Too,” 365.

more recent years, women have been able to make a name for themselves with the aid of changing attitudes toward female musicians. Composers such as Joan Tower, Ellen Taaffe Zwilich, Thea Musgrave, Pauline Oliveros, and Libby Larsen have received substantial recognition as professional women in music.⁷¹

With her unique methodologies, Susan McClary made significant contributions to the field of feminist musicology. The questions she asked and the research she presented can be considered very radical and controversial, but her insights are said by many of her colleagues to have made a valuable contribution to musicology.

Marcia J. Citron

Marcia J. Citron was born in 1945, received her doctorate from the University of North Carolina in 1971, and currently teaches at Rice University in Houston, Texas.⁷² Like most feminist musicologists, she started in the historical area of research of women in music, then slowly moved toward the emerging areas of feminist musicology.⁷³ Citron has contributed numerous publications and personal insight into this field. She has been conducting historical research about women in music since the mid-1970's and, in the late 1980's, she played an important role in moving the inquiry of music history to a more gender-based analysis of history. This approach views gender as an influencing factor on all aspects of musical culture.⁷⁴

In her best known book, *Gender and the Musical Canon*, published in 1993, Citron researched various factors that have influenced the formation of the male-

⁷¹ McClary, "Of Patriarchs ... and Matriarchs, Too."

⁷² Rice University, "Marcia J. Citron," Rice University Shepherd School of Music, <http://music.rice.edu/facultybios/citron.shtml>.

⁷³ Neuls-Bates, *Women in Music*, 361.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 59.

dominated musical canon. In her view, these factors silenced the creativity of women, prevented professionalism in women's careers, developed strict gender roles within music, created a bias in musical reception towards male musicians, and denied women's place in the canon. Citron also has done research on the psychological effect which stereotypical views about gender have had upon women composers and musicians. For example, she believes during certain historical eras women possibly could have been dissuaded from composing music in certain genres that were thought of as “masculine” forms, such as the symphony.⁷⁵

Citron has developed a methodology that can be described in five main categories. First, Citron studied the musical constructions of gender and sexuality. In her research, she looked at western art's musical ability to reflect and construct social stereotypes of gender, mainly within musical narratives. While she does not provide specific examples of this methodology, she discusses this ability in detail in her research on sonata form and aesthetic.⁷⁶

Second, Citron researched the idea of gender and sexuality in a musical narrative, including the application of women-centered theories and ideologies to absolute, as opposed to programmatic, music. Citron tackled the analysis of an absolute musical piece with gender-based techniques. Her approach looks at both historical and gender issues and always brings into question the validity of this type of approach.⁷⁷ The problem, however, is this: how does one use woman-centered theories and methodologies when there is no obvious gender content within the music? Citron states this approach has to include a belief that content meaning exists

⁷⁵ Pendle, *Women and Music*, 191.

⁷⁶ Cook and Tsou, *Cecilia Reclaimed*, 16.

⁷⁷ Neuls-Bates, *Women in Music*, 364.

within the musical narratives.⁷⁸

An example of this type of methodology is Citron's research and analysis on sonata form and aesthetic. Citron found that musicology's traditional view of sonata form, similar to other form types, is based upon a neutral, abstract plan. Because of this, scholars assume that this type of form is free from gendered attributes or symbols. However, Citron's research has led her to conclude the exact opposite. She states sonata form can be considered a metaphor for the gendered struggle.⁷⁹ Vincent D'Indy, a notable nineteenth-century composer, discusses this implied struggle as follows:

Force and energy, concision and clarity: such are almost variably the essential masculine characteristics belonging to the first idea: it imposes itself in brusque rhythms, affirming very nobly its tonal ownership, one and definitive. The second idea, in contrast, entirely gentle and of melodic grace, is affective almost always by means of its verbosity and modulatory vagueness of the eminently alluring feminine: supple and elegant, it spreads out progressively the curve of its ornamented melody; circumscribed more or less clearly in a neighboring tonality in the course of the exposition, it will always depart from it in the recapitulation, in order to adopt the first tonality occupied from the beginning by the dominant masculine element, along. It is as if, after the active battle of the development, the being of gentleness and weakness has to submit, whether by violence or by persuasion, to the conquest of the being of force and power.⁸⁰

According to D'Indy and Citron, absolute, as opposed to programmatic music, has elevated the “masculine” while suppressing the “feminine.”⁸¹ Instead of having a neutral blank slate in music, this idea of “masculine” and “feminine” in music was seen as viable. While these views can be considered sexist and discriminatory in nature, what some observed in the music is consistent with certain gender ideologies

⁷⁸ Cook and Tsou, *Cecilia Reclaimed*, 16.

⁷⁹ Citron, *Gender and the Musical Canon*, 134.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 136.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 142.

of the past.

According to Citron, the sonata form is supposedly for privileged and superior men in society which was supported by certain patriarchal ideologies. The idea of women composing sonata form or the “feminine” being elevated in sonata form was unheard of in previous centuries. Citron's analysis of Cécile Chaminade's *Sonata*, Op. 21 is valuable to the discussion of this methodology. According to Citron, Chaminade challenged the traditional gendered style of sonata within the first movement of this piece.⁸² For reference, the main key of the movement is c minor. The primary “masculine” theme is typical for this gendered style (Example 4).⁸³ The characteristics it portrays are stability, strength, and dominance.⁸⁴

Example 4: "Masculine" theme in Chaminade's *Sonata*, Op. 21 (Measures 1-8).



However, the supporting fugal “feminine” theme has attributes of both genders (Example 5).⁸⁵ This theme displays lyricism and has a softer dynamic level on its "feminine" side; however on its "masculine" side, the theme recalls the return of the home key. That is not the usual protocol for the "feminine" theme.⁸⁶

⁸² Citron, *Gender and the Musical Canon*, 145.

⁸³ Ibid., 148.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 148-149.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 149 and 151.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 152.

Example 5: Beginning of fugal "feminine" theme in Chaminade's *Sonata*, Op. 21 (Measures 36-48).



According to Citron, this is unique for the nineteenth century. Chaminade composes the secondary theme in a way that it will not be defined by the masculine theme. In a typical sonata, the secondary theme transfers itself to another key, or another identity, before joining again with the "masculine" theme. However, in this piece, the secondary theme only hints at the keys of Eb and Ab instead of completely transferring to them. It seems like the secondary theme does not want to be defined by the "masculine" theme. According to Citron, this may have been a statement Chaminade wanted to make.⁸⁷

Third, Citron exercised a methodology of seeing music as a gendered discourse. She focuses mainly on the historical gendered aspects of music within her

⁸⁷ Citron, *Gender and the Musical Canon*, 154.

research, while McClary primarily focused on how “femininity” and “masculinity” are expressed within music. According to Citron, music is created out of specific social contexts. The music itself can say a lot about the culture from which it originates just as it does in literature and film.⁸⁸ Citron makes a point saying, “The category of gender acknowledges social difference between men and women and allows for analysis of women (and men) and their experiences on their own terms.”⁸⁹ The music composed by men and women should not be compared only to the other gender's music. The discrediting of women's music in earlier generations has stemmed from this practice. If the “feminine” is celebrated, women may truly be able to develop Citron's idea of a female aesthetic. This is the idea of women composers creating their unique definition of themselves within music without the traditional idea of “masculine” and “feminine” in music.⁹⁰ This perhaps may allow musicians to “distinguish societal ideals from the experiences of real women and recognize that strategies of gendered representation typically treat ideals rather than lived experience.”⁹¹

An aspect of this methodology is the issue of whether basic elements of music can identify the gender of its composer. While her research did not focus on gender or sexuality within music, she provided her opinion on that aspect of the field.

I don't think that usually one can tell whether a musical composition has been written by a man or a woman, and of course when I say that, I am referring to instrumental compositions. If a piece has a text, I think there are ways one can tell regarding the text setting or the sympathy with particular points of view—although many male composers have been sympathetic to women characters and many women composers

88 Citron, *Gender and the Musical Canon*, 120.

89 Ibid., 5.

90 Ibid., 75.

91 Ibid., 121.

have been sympathetic to male characters. But in terms of instrumental music, I think it may be futile to determine the composer's gender.⁹²

She has also stated if someone was familiar with women's music, then he or she could find clues, but not all women composers compose with the same techniques.⁹³ For Citron, however, the gender of the composer does not dictate what gendered codes of representation are used within the work. Composers can manipulate the idea of gendered codes any way they desire, so identifying the gender of the composer will be impossible unless we identify the composer's opinion of representation.⁹⁴ Scholars can possibly identify tendencies of a female aesthetic, but the evidence for identifying the gender of the composer is never conclusive.⁹⁵

Fourth, she has completed historical analyses of various women in music, specifically on Fanny Mendelssohn and Lili Boulanger, and has formed general conclusions on how women composers and musicians functioned within their specific generations. Citron notes that society has had a great influence on women's creative output. There were many ideologies and historical traditions which determined a woman's musical future.⁹⁶ Citron cites various challenges that women faced while pursuing music including education, discouragement from entering the music field, negative attitudes towards women, specific gender roles such as wifehood and motherhood limiting their creative output, health issues, and ideologies that specified what was acceptable for women.⁹⁷

When researching men and women in music, musicologists discuss various

⁹² Citron in Neuls-Bates, *Women in Music*, 369.

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Citron, *Gender and the Musical Canon*, 158-159.

⁹⁵ Cook and Tsou, *Cecilia Reclaimed*, 17.

⁹⁶ Pendle, *Women and Music*, 13-14.

⁹⁷ Ibid., 191.

aspects of their lives: their background, their musical education and how they received it, the challenges that they faced in any capacity, their musical works, unique personal history or personality aspects important to mention such as marriages or lifestyle choices, honors they received, and musical positions they held. These aspects are discussed regardless of a composer's gender. However, when analyzing with a feminist approach, Citron believes that other aspects of women's lives are crucial to discuss, such as their personal ideologies when it comes to women in music and gender roles, similarities and differences in music written by their male counterparts, changes in the musical spheres during their lifetimes, how they personally challenged gender stereotypes, and how their legacy impacted music for future women musicians.⁹⁸

An example of this methodology in Citron's work is the article she wrote for a collection of essays of women in music, in which she discusses European composers and musicians from 1880 to 1918.⁹⁹ The women she discusses are Augusta Holmès, Cécile Chaminade, Agathe Backer-Grøndahl, Elfrida Andrée, Lili Boulanger, Alma Mahler-Werfel, and Ethel Smyth. Through her research, she noted the improvement of the status of European women from 1880 to 1918. Women's voices became more audible in the political, social, and economic circles. What affected this change was nationalism, internationalism, industrialization, and women entering the labor force because of war vacancies. With all these aspects, there was a need for social reform, especially for women.¹⁰⁰ Birth control and planned parenthood were issues discussed

⁹⁸ Pendle, *Women and Music*, 191.

⁹⁹ Ibid., 175-192

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 175.

during this time. This enabled women to be creative on their own terms.¹⁰¹ Some reforms, however, did not last long. After World War I, men came back to work and many women lost their wartime jobs.¹⁰²

Within this article, Citron discusses the typical profile of the European woman composer. She states that they were most likely from the middle or high social class with an artistic home environment. This environment provided the knowledge and encouragement required for women to succeed in music. Male success was taken for granted, but women's exceptional talent was considered "rare." Women composers had few role models in the field of music. Women were forging paths not previously taken by their sex. However, these female composers had better educational opportunities than those in the past because of changing attitudes toward women. Ethel Smyth and Lili Boulanger took advantage of these educational opportunities.¹⁰³

The final methodology is Citron's analysis of the musical canon. She noticed women composers were missing within the traditional musical canon. The following factors affected women before the start of the twentieth century and continue to affect women today.¹⁰⁴ The first of these factors within this final methodology is the denial of access to compositional training. Women faced this disadvantage because education was usually only provided for men in European patriarchal society.¹⁰⁵ Second, women composers rarely got their music published. Citron states this was a reality because publishing houses did not want to risk losing money since music written by women was not very popular.¹⁰⁶ Third, women in most cases were denied

101 Pendle, *Women and Music*, 176.

102 Ibid., 175.

103 Ibid., 176.

104 Ibid., 104.

105 Citron, "Gender, Professionalism, and the Musical Canon," 105.

106 Ibid., 106.

musical employment. In the European patriarchal society, women were expected to become submissive wives and devoted mothers. Before the mid-twentieth century, this mindset tended to deny women musical employment in occupations such as collegiate teaching, composing, and conducting.¹⁰⁷ Those women who were employed musically were usually part of the social elite.¹⁰⁸

The fourth reason Citron states is many women “have felt compelled to conceal their femaleness and assume authorship under a neutral or masculine identity.”¹⁰⁹ Women could either use a pseudonym, use their own name, use their maiden name, or remain anonymous.¹¹⁰ Citron states this revealed gender prejudice in past centuries as a very real issue. Examples of such male pseudonyms include George Sand (aka Amantine-Lucile-Aurore Dupin) and George Eliot (aka Mary Ann Evans); even Clara Schumann and Amy Beach wrote under their husband's name on occasion.¹¹¹

Fifth, women in music were evaluated unfairly against men. Women, according to Citron, were placed into a second-rate, “separate but not equal” status. Women were criticized if their music showed their “feminine” nature, but also criticized if their music showed “masculine” traits.¹¹² Reviews written on women's works would read “surprisingly good for a woman” and showed “fine skill if not much inspiration.”¹¹³ According to Citron, in order for women's music to be recognized in the canon, their music needs to have a positive reception by an

107 Citron, “Gender, Professionalism and the Musical Canon,” 106-108 and Pauline Oliveros and Fred Maus, “A Conversation about Feminism and Music,” *Perspectives of New Music* 32, no. 2 (1994): 177, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/833606>.

108 Citron, “Gender, Professionalism and the Musical Canon,” 106-108.

109 Ibid., 108.

110 Ibid., 97-98.

111 Ibid., 108.

112 Ibid., 108-109.

113 Ibid., 109.

influential group of people. In reviews, critics need to deem women's music as worthy and to praise the female composer personally.¹¹⁴

The final point Citron makes is that women, such as Mozart's sister, Maria Ann Mozart, were only allowed into the small private music spheres and not larger public spheres.¹¹⁵ Professionalism in the public spheres was key to personal recognition in the musical canon. Many ideological fears prevented women from entering into the professional world. For example, professionalism can threaten women's image, or it may mean neglect in family nurture. Professional women could become more successful than men, mix male and female social circles, and even put women in the spotlight.¹¹⁶ Many of these aspects may seem silly and unnecessary in contemporary western culture, but before the twentieth century, overly protecting women's virtue and purity was a priority. However, some women did not appreciate this overbearing protection. According to Citron, "Public [careers] represent an epistemological space without limits, and therefore privileged. Private [careers] suggest boundaries of knowledge and access to knowledge; it implies a lesser justification for knowledge and authority."¹¹⁷ According to Citron, all of these five factors have prevented any attempt to integrate women's musical work into the male-homogenous canon.¹¹⁸

With her methodological approach, Marcia J. Citron also made great advances in the field of feminist musicology during the feminist academia boom. She took a more careful route in her feminist research than did McClary.

114 Citron, *Gender and the Musical Canon*, 168.

115 Citron, "Gender, Professional, and the Musical Canon," 110.

116 Citron, *Gender and the Musical Canon*, 86.

117 Ibid.

118 Citron, "Gender, Professionalism and the Musical Canon," 108.

Conclusion

Susan McClary and Marcia J. Citron are two musicologists who were influenced by feminism and, through it, have guided the musicological world in the direction of feminist musicology. This subject is important if today's musicians wish to evaluate the effects of social movements upon the music and music scholarship of a particular time and culture. McClary and Citron have shown that the history of women in music has not been the same as the history of men. Scholars continue to investigate feminist musicology in order that the history of women and the “feminine” in music will not be forgotten. Women and the “feminine” need to be recognized and celebrated.¹¹⁹ Feminist musicology has expanded the field of music. Women now have a better representation in the various aspects of the field of music as well as more identifiable role models than in past centuries. Women composers and musicians no longer have the restrictions which held them back in the past. Women have the freedom to express themselves musically in any way they choose. The path of developing the field of feminist musicology has been challenging and both McClary and Citron have been persistent pioneers. They, along with other scholars, have met with “considerable resistance, both outside the feminist movement and within it.”¹²⁰ In conclusion, as Karin Pendle states, “courage, tolerance of difference, openness, and support is essential for productive work in this area to continue.”¹²¹

119 Bowers, “Feminist Scholarship and the Field of Musicology: I”, 85.

120 Pendle, *Women and Music*, 16.

121 Ibid.

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